

State Government & Tribal Affairs Committee

HB 2197

Brief Description: Abolishing the department of social and health services and creating new departments to take over its functions.

Sponsors: Representatives Armstrong, Angel, Haler, Appleton, Short, Morris, Johnson, Hunt, Kretz, Newhouse, Eddy, Lias, Warnick, McCune, Hurst, Roach, Rodne, Rolfes, Blake, Ericksen, Upthegrove, Simpson, Campbell, Takko, Moeller, Cox, Sells, Hope, Springer, Williams, Chase, Pearson and Kristiansen.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Abolishes the Department of Social and Health Services and creates in its place four new departments.

Hearing Date: 2/20/09

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135)

Background:

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) was established in 1970. It was created by merging the former Department of Health, Department of Public Assistance, Department of Institutions, the Veterans' Rehabilitation Council, and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation of the Coordinating Council on Occupational Education. The DSHS was designed to "integrate and coordinate all those activities involving provision of care for individuals who, as a result of their economic, social, or health condition, require financial assistance, institutional care, rehabilitation, or other social and health services."

Programs and administrations within the DSHS include: aging and disability; alcohol and substance abuse; child support; children's services; deaf and hard of hearing; health care

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assistance; juvenile rehabilitation; mental health; research and data analysis; residential habilitation centers; special commitment center; state hospitals; and vocational rehabilitation.

The DSHS has over 19,000 full time equivalent employees, and the most recent operating budget totaled approximately \$19 billion.

Summary of Bill:

The stated findings of the Legislature are that the DSHS has grown significantly and is so large that it is difficult to administer; does not have the appropriate focus on critical functions; does not effectively deliver services and programs; leads to higher state costs through inefficiencies due to its size; and is difficult to measure the performance of the agency.

The DSHS is abolished and its powers, duties, and functions are transferred to the following new departments: (1) the Department of Economic Services; (2) the Department of Medical Assistance; (3) the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services; and (4) the Department of Children's Services. By July 1, 2009, the Governor shall appoint a transition team consisting of representatives from the Office of Finance Management and the divisions of the DSHS. The transition team shall divide up the functions of the DSHS into the newly created departments and, by January 1, 2010, will submit the plan and the necessary implementing legislation to the Legislature so that the new agencies will be operating by July 1, 2011.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 16, 2009.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.